INFO NOT TO BE RELEASED

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CA Press Background
November 14, 1978

PEOPLE'S TEMPLE IN GUYANA

Congressman Leo Ryan (D-Calif.) departs today for Georgetown, Guyana, to investigate allegations of mind control, beatings, etc., by the People's Temple. The People's Temple is a religious/socialist organization headed by a former prominent California political figure, "Bishop" Jim Jones. The allegations of abuse, etc., have been made by former members of the People's Temple and by relatives of present members.

The actual People's Temple operation in Guyana is an agricultural commune out in the jungle. Approximately quarterly, a consular officer from the Embassy in Georgetown travels to the agricultural commune to perform the regular protection and welfare functions. To date, none of those persons the consul has interviewed at the People's Temple have been willing to confirm any of the allegations.

Supporters of the People's Temple have alleged a conspiracy by the USG against the People's Temple; opponents claim the USG is not living up to its responsibilities vis-a-vis the Americans in the People's Temple. The truth is in between. The USG is not investigating or conspiring against the People's Temple: The Department is simply performing its statutory and traditional functions. On the other hand, the Department and Embassy in Georgetown have no independent investigative authority and the consul's visits should not be taken as confirming or denying any allegations.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

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